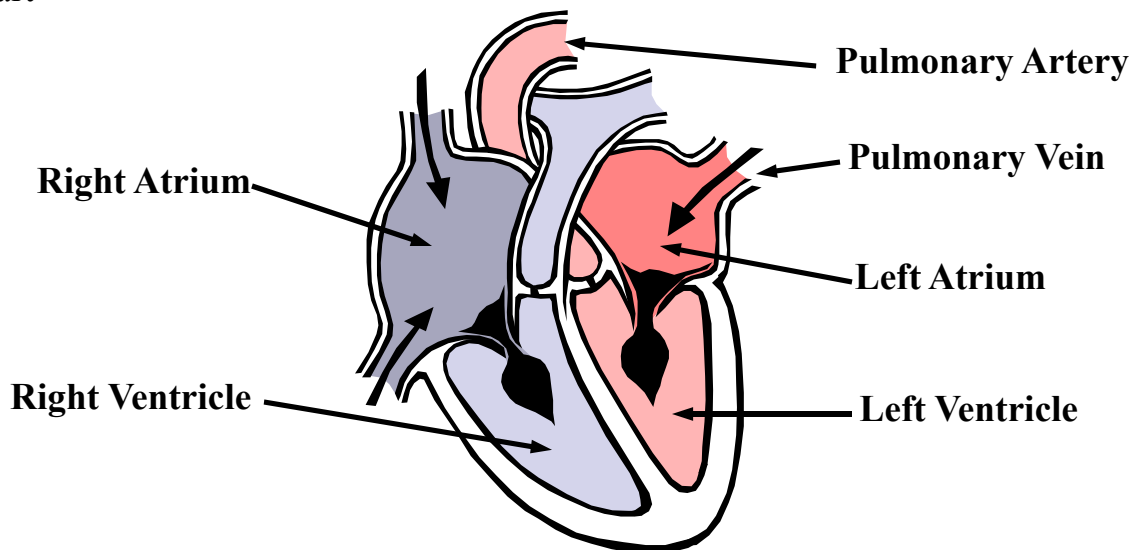


Living with Congestive Heart Failure

How a Healthy Heart Works

The Parts of the Heart:

- The heart has four chambers that hold the blood as it moves through the heart. The upper chambers are called **atria** and the lower chambers are called **ventricles**.
- The heart muscle pumps blood from chamber to chamber
- There are four **valves** that act like one-way doors, separating the chambers. Their purpose is to keep the blood moving forward. The valves open to let blood through and close to keep it from moving backward
- The **pulmonary artery** carries blood that needs oxygen from the heart to the lungs. The **pulmonary veins** carry oxygen-rich blood from the lungs to the heart



The Flow of Blood:

- The **right side of the heart** pumps the blood to the **lungs**.
- In the lungs, the blood receives **oxygen**.
- The oxygen-rich blood travels back to the **left side of the heart**.
- The left side of the heart pumps the blood to the **organs, limbs, brain, and all the other parts of the body**.
- After your body uses up the oxygen in the blood, it sends the blood back to the right side of the heart and the process starts again.

You Have Congestive Heart Failure!

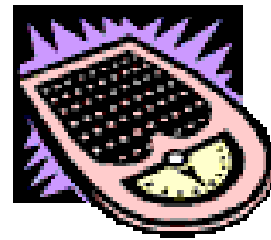
What is Congestive Heart Failure?

- Congestive Heart Failure is also known as CHF or Heart Failure.
- In CHF, your heart does not pump as well as it should and the blood backs up in your veins.
- A backup in the veins of the lungs causes shortness of breath.
- A backup in the veins of the legs causes swelling or edema.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of CHF?

Think “G HEARTS “!

Gain in weight
Hard time doing usual activities
Energy is low
Ankle, feet, or leg swelling
Restroom many times at night
Thinking becomes confused
Shortness of breath



Watch for weight gain

What is the Treatment?

CHF cannot be cured but it can be controlled with the use of:

- Medications
- Diet
- Controlled Activity
- Lifestyle Changes

What Signs Should I Look For:

- Your breathing becomes more difficult.
- You gain 3 pounds in 3 days or 5 pounds in one week.
- Your feet or ankles swell more than usual.
- You pass less water.
- You notice you're getting tired faster.
- You begin coughing at night.
- You think you are having side effects from your medication.
- You become dizzy or you faint.
- You have tightness or pain in your chest.

If you have any questions call the Northwest Call Center for advice. The number is 1-888-233-8305. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Medications

1. Be sure that all of your providers know about everything you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.
2. Make sure your provider knows about any allergies and bad reactions you have had to medicines.
3. When your provider writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it.
4. Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand—both when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them.



Know your medicines



Be able to read your prescriptions

- ⇒ What is the medicine for?
- ⇒ How am I supposed to take it, and for how long?
- ⇒ What side effects are likely? What do I do if they occur?
- ⇒ Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
- ⇒ What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?

5. When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, ask: Is this the medicine that my provider prescribed?
6. If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, **ask**.
7. Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. Ask questions if you're not sure how to use it.
8. Ask for written information about side effects your medicine could cause.



Ask your pharmacist your questions.



9. Ask your provider or pharmacist which medications can be taken with meals.
10. Keep track of your medications. Keep a written schedule or use a pillbox that is marked with the days of the week and the time of the day. Fill the pillbox at the beginning of each week. You only have to open each day's section to take your pills for that day and time.

Pillbox

If you don't want to use a pill box, you can track when you need to take your medicine by using a chart like this.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
Noon	Noon	Noon	Noon	Noon	Noon	Noon
Evening	Evening	Evening	Evening	Evening	Evening	Evening
Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime

11. Take your pills at the same time each day. If you take them when you regularly do something else, like when you brush your teeth or eat a meal, it will help you remember.
12. Do not skip or increase doses unless your provider tells you to do this.
13. If you accidentally miss a dose **do not** “double up” or take it with the next dose.
14. Make sure you have enough medication on hand so you don't run out. Order more medication when you still have a two-week supply left.
15. Carry a list of your medications in your wallet or purse. Show the list to any provider you go to for treatment. Also show it to your pharmacist before you buy any prescription or nonprescription medication. Your pharmacist can tell you which medications can cause problems when taken with each other.
16. Keep medicines stored in a cool, dark place out of reach of children. The bathroom medicine cabinet is not a good place. The bathroom becomes too humid when you shower or bathe.

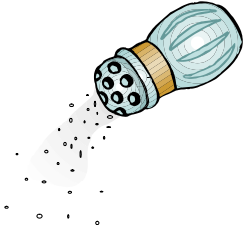


**Keep a list of
your medicines**

Common Medicines for CHF

Type	How it Works	Important Information	Report Any of These to Your Provider
Digoxin (heart pill)	Helps your heart pump stronger	Do not skip doses	Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, yellow vision, blurred vision, heart skipping beats, heart beating faster or slower than usual
Diuretics (water pill)	Helps rid your body of excess water in your lungs or feet and ankles	Take early in the day Stand up slowly to avoid dizziness	Dizziness, weakness, skin rash, sudden weight changes, abdominal or muscle cramps, swelling of feet or legs
Potassium	Replaces mineral you lose when you take diuretics	Take with your meals to reduce stomach upset	Nausea, vomiting, confusion, leg cramps, numbness or tingling in hands, feet or lips, irregular heartbeat, weakness or heaviness in legs
Ace Inhibitors (blood pressure and heart pill)	Lowers your blood pressure and slows down your heart rate. This reduces the amount of work your heart does.	Dizziness occurs while you adjust to the medicine. Do not take other medicines unless your provider okays it. Have your blood pressure checked regularly	Headache, rash, racing heartbeat, dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hand or feet, trouble breathing or swallowing
Beta blockers (blood pressure and heart pill)	Lowers your blood pressure and slows down your heart rate. This reduces the amount of work your heart does.	Drowsiness, dizziness, light-headedness occurs while you adjust to the medicine. Do not stop taking this medicine suddenly	Dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hands or feet, trouble breathing or swallowing

Diet



**Watch the salt
in your diet!**

A diet high in sodium (salt) can cause your body to retain water. This increases your heart's workload. Your heart has to work much harder to pump this extra water. People with CHF need to pay special attention to the sodium in their diet, so they do not add to their heart's workload. Too much sodium in your diet can also cause swelling, weight gain, and shortness of breath.

Eating less sodium is one of the most important things people with CHF can do. Here are some tips to help you lower the sodium in your diet.

Tips for eating less salt:

- Do not put a salt shaker on the table.
- Do not add salt to food when cooking. Use salt-free seasonings, see below.
- Ask your health care provider or dietitian about the use of salt substitutes. They may contain extra potassium, which may or may not be right for you.
- Use fresh or frozen vegetables whenever possible. If you must use canned vegetables, drain and rinse canned foods before preparing them to remove some of the salt. Use low sodium canned vegetables
- Read labels for sodium content. See "Label Reading" section.
- **Avoid** these salty seasonings:
 - Seasoned salts, garlic salt, and onion salt
 - BBQ sauce, chili sauce, and steak sauce
 - Mustard and catsup
 - Soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce
 - Meat tenderizer
 - Cooking sherry or cooking wine
 - Bouillon Cubes
 - Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- **Try** these salt-free seasonings:
 - Pepper
 - Garlic Powder
 - Herbs such as oregano, basil, rosemary, thyme, dill, and sage
 - Cumin
 - Red Pepper Flakes
 - Onions, chives, and scallions



**Mustard, ketchup,
high salt condiments**



Fresh basil

Lowering the amount of salt in your diet can be challenging. Many foods you are used to eating are high in salt. The following foods are usually high in sodium (but **read the labels**, because some may be available in a low-salt form):

- Salted, cured, and processed meats such as ham, bacon, sausage, salami, salt pork, bologna, and hotdogs.
- Canned soups and dry soup mixes.
- Instant meals, such as flavored rice or pasta mixes and potato sidedishes.
- Preseasoned mixes (tacos, chili, sauces, gravies, etc).
- Prepackaged frozen dinners (If the frozen dinner is the **entire meal** and it has **less than 800mg** of sodium, it is okay)
- Fast foods.
- Cheeses.



Cured and processed meats



Snack food like potato chips

- Snack foods such as crackers, pretzels, potato chips, tortilla chips, microwave popcorn, salted nuts, and pickles.
- Canned meats and fish. Water packed tuna or salmon tends to be lower in salt.
- Instant cooked cereals such as grits, cream of wheat, and oatmeal.
- Canned vegetables and tomato juice.
- Salted butter and margarine
- Prepared mixes for pancakes, muffins, and cornbread.
- Salad dressings.
- Buttermilk.
- Softened water.

Label Reading

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 80%	Vitamin C 60%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

You will need to start reading food labels to check the salt content (listed as “sodium”). The “nutrition facts” panel lists sodium in milligrams (mg).

The American Heart Association recommends that people with CHF should choose **foods that have less than 140 mg** of sodium per serving, and **less than 2400 mg** of sodium per day.

Goal: Eat foods that have less than 140 mg sodium per serving. If a serving is an entire meal (frozen dinner), less than 800 mg sodium is suggested.

Some terms to know

Sodium-Free: less than 5 mg of sodium per serving.

Very low-sodium: 35 mg or less per serving.

Low-sodium: 140 mg or less per serving.

Unsalted, No salt added, or without added salt: made without the salt that is normally used, but still contains sodium that is a natural part of the food.

Fluid

- Your provider may want to limit the amount of fluid that you drink each day, including any liquids taken with medications.
- You may have to keep a record of the amount of fluid that you drink each day.
- Keep track of your intake of the following liquids and foods (and anything else that seems similar). These count as part of the daily total:



juice

Fluids

Water
Juice
Ice Cubes
Coffee
Milk
Soup
Tea
Soda

Foods

Yogurt
Pudding
Ice Cream
Sherbet
Gelatin



pudding

You can keep track of the fluid that you drink by:

Recording all the fluid that you drink during the day.

Use these measurements to help you track your fluid intake:

1 cup = 8 ounces = 240 cc

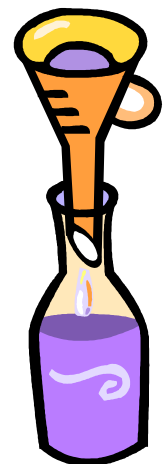
4 cups = 32 ounces = 1 qt = 1000 cc = 1 liter

1 ml = 1 cc

1 ounce = 30 cc

Or

Mark a large container with the amount of fluid that you are allowed for the day. Each time you consume fluid, pour an equal amount of water into the container. When the container is filled you have reached your daily limit.



Fill a container
with water as you
use your allowed
fluid limit

Your provider has prescribed a fluid restriction of:

_____ cc or (_____ cups per day) _

Your Weight and Activity with CHF

Recording Your Weight

An accurate recording of weight is important to treat CHF. A rapid weight gain might be a sign that you are retaining fluid and need a change in your treatment plan.

- Weigh yourself at the same time using the same scale.
- Weigh in the morning after you've used the bathroom and before you eat breakfast.
- Record your weight on a chart.
- Your provider will tell you how often to weigh yourself. It will vary from 2 times a week to daily depending upon your condition.



Weighing yourself

Activity

CHF may prevent you from being as active as you once were.

The following is a list of some general guidelines for physical activity:

- **Avoid** over exertion, especially activity that causes dizziness, moderate shortness of breath, or chest discomfort.
- **Avoid** physical activity in extreme temperatures or when you do not feel well
- **Avoid** physical activity 1-2 hours after eating.
- **Avoid** tasks that require lifting heavy objects.
- If it hurts or causes pain, it is wrong! **Avoid** activities that cause you pain.
- Short walks are a **good way** to begin your physical activity.

Don't exercise beyond the recommendations from your provider.

Remember, **“More is not always better”**

It's important to pace your activity. Talk to your Health Care Provider if you would like a formal exercise program.



Short walks are always good exercise

Life Style Changes

Rest

Planning rest periods throughout the day allows for your heart muscle to regain its strength. You may feel better if you take periodic naps. Be sure to put your feet up.

Important Things to Remember and Do

- **Stop smoking**
Smoking narrows your blood vessels and reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood. Ask your provider for more information about the VA's "Stop Smoking" Classes.
- **Keep your weight within the range** your provider says is appropriate for you. Extra weight makes your heart work harder.
- **Find ways to deal with stress.**
- Talk with your health care provider about alcohol intake.
- Keep your appointments and follow your provider's instructions.
- Take your medicines according to instructions.



Other Steps You Can Take

- **Speak up** if you have questions or concerns. You have a right to question anyone who is involved with your care.
- Make sure that someone, such as your health care provider, is in charge of your care.
- Make sure that all health professionals involved in your care have important health information about you. **Do not** assume that everyone knows everything they need to.
- **Ask** a family member or friend to be there with you and to be your advocate (someone who can help get things done and speak up for you if you can't). Even if you think you don't need help now, you might need it later.
- **Ask questions** about tests your provider recommends. It is a good idea to find out why a test or treatment is needed and how it can help you. You could be better off without it.
- **Ask about your test results.** If you have a test, don't assume that no news is good news. Learn about your condition and treatments by asking your provider, nurse or others involved with your care.
- **Remember take time to enjoy your life.** Stay close to friends and family who will give you support and encouragement.

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